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Poems

Peter Bakowski

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Abstract

THE STUTTERING BOY, LULLABY OF ST. KILDA, BONDI AFTERNOONS - for Yusuke Keida, IN PRAISE OF MOVEMENT -for Krystyna, THE OLD WOMEN OF BRIA MARKET, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Peter Bakowski

THE STUTTERING BOY

He's been asked a question.

He herds the pigs
that are his fingers
into the inkwell.

He stands,
a wrinkled sack of discomfort.

Syllables prowls
the wet jail of his mouth
awaiting
their
certain slaughter.

The class
look out the windows,
at their pencils,
think of the ants
they burnt at lunch-time
with their magnifying glasses.

LULLABY OF ST. KILDA

The moon has eyelashes
called moonbeams.
Cats have always been
foremen of the night.
Windows that squeak when you open them
are poems to mice.

Clouds are sheep
eating the grass of the sky.
Fish tickle the ocean
and it goes running to the shore.
Dogs bark their envy of the stars.
And when men and women laugh –

diamonds grow bigger
under the soil.

BONDI AFTERNOONS

– for Yusuke Keida

An ant walks over your pink letter
and I'm listening to Nico's 'Chelsea Girl' album –
it speaks of rain and afternoons, rendezvous and loss.
Birds fly, men look out at ships,
curtains flap, a woman is buying shoes.
I hear children and seagulls squeal
the clock leisurely licks its paws.
There is rust and washing and tin chimneys.
It's timeless, lazy, beautiful.
An acoustic guitar and mist can still
break your heart.

IN PRAISE OF MOVEMENT

– for Krystyna

I bought
these potatoes last week –
they're starting
to go green:
If I just leave
my life
it will do the same.
I've got to circulate it

down the streets
down the telephone receiver
into the
firemen's net of friendships.
It's time to kiss
the girls
luck
bread
the water tap
the roof
your reading glasses.

I look out the back door:
I can see
cats
white clouds
traffic
birds flying –
No living thing knows
the name of the game
or the stakes
but they are all going
somewhere.

Deal me in.

THE OLD WOMEN OF BRIA MARKET, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The old women of the market
possess knowledge:
it's in their wood-knot eyes
it's in their easy, toothless smiles
it lies deep in their faces,
like last water cracked in the river bed.

They know the sun
they are not foolish in its presence.
They sit on their low stools of bamboo and hide
and brush away time as if it were a fly.

They sit in their folded wings of cloth
serene as desert birds descending
to the jewel that is water.

They sell dollops of peanut paste
which they deftly wrap and tie in clean, waxy palm leaves.
They sell sugar cubes stacked in playful geometry,
they sell charcoaled fish – fly mad and tree trunk black,
they sell cooking oil in old perfume bottles
of European origin.
They sit behind large enamel buckets
filled with roast monkey chests complete with paws –
now forever your mind carries the image
of oil-reddened monkey paws surreally sticking out of
innocently flower-painted enamel buckets.

And the old women of the market
sit and wait, as the sun walks across the world,
wait for a customer
to cool their palm with a coin;
patient
like the village river.